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STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/PPD, ECA, MEPI

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SUBJECT: MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION
RE-APPOINTED (CORRECTED COPY)

REF: KUWAIT 475

¶1. Summary: The Ambassador met with reappointed Minister of Education and Higher Education, Dr. Adel Al-Tabtaba,ei on Wednesday, October 4. The Minister designated a new point of contact within the Ministry of Education to work with the Embassy, a step we hope will overcome obstacles to ongoing programs encountered due to recent personnel changes. During the brief courtesy call, the Minister asked for support for the newly formed Center for Development of Education. He also expressed appreciation for the continued support the Ministry receives from the Embassy. End summary.

¶2. On the morning of October 4, the Ambassador, accompanied by the PAO and Cultural Affairs Specialist, met with conservative-leaning Minister of Education and Higher Education, Dr. Adel Al-Tabtaba,ei at his office located in the Ministry of Higher Education. The Minister had been appointed by the Amir in February, 2006 (see reftel). He subsequently was reappointed to his position following the June 29 elections resulting from the Amir's constitutional dissolution of the Kuwaiti parliament.

¶3. During the short meeting, the Minister mentioned the establishment of a new Center for Development of Education and asked for the Embassy's assistance in getting the center off the ground. He admitted that no director had been assigned to the center yet, but optimistically expressed hope to make an appointment within the coming two weeks. The Ambassador recommended the Kuwait Foundation for Advanced Sciences (KFAS) as a suitable partner for this project since the organization has instituted a number of executive leadership, educational and reform seminars in conjunction with Harvard University on a regular basis.

¶4. In response to the Ambassador's articulation of the broad range of educational programs, professional exchanges, MEPI projects, and fellowships the Embassy currently is engaged in with the Ministry, the Minister designated a new point of contact for all future interaction on these initiatives, his legal advisor, Dr. Abdullah Al-Hayyan. The Minister showed only nominal familiarity with and interest in the IVLP, Fulbright or MEPI projects, including the My Arabic Library and Civic Education projects recently proposed to the Ministry and received with some enthusiasm by his staff. He did say, however, that he would like to continue all bilateral activities that &promote good relations8 including the YES and Access programs administered by AMIDEAST in coordination with the Ministry of Education.

¶5. Comment: The Minister's designation of a new point of contact for the Embassy may be part of a move to solidify his control at the Ministry of Education, where contention has arisen since his appointment and ensuing attempts to reorganize personnel. Previously, the main points of contact for educational programs had been Dr. Suad Al-Ansari,

Director General of English Teaching Programs and Dr. Yusra Al-Omar, Director of the Department of Coordination and Follow Up. Dr. Al-Ansari recently resigned to demonstrate her protest against the new Minister's alleged extreme bureaucratic tendencies and lack of acknowledgement or support for the role of educational professionals in the Ministry. The personnel changes have caused significant delays in obtaining concurrence to move forward with new and ongoing educational programs. Meanwhile, by comparison, observers familiar with the inner workings of the educational bureaucracy point out that the Ministry of Higher Education remains firmly under the authority of U.S.-educated Under Secretary Dr. Rasha Al-Sabah, where the Embassy enjoys open

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access and strong support. End comment.
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